



**Montgomery County, MD
Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
February 9th, 2011**

Welcome and Approval of January Meeting Summary Minutes:

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Seth Morgan, Commissioner, motioned for the January Meeting Summary Minutes to be approved. Charlie Crawford, Vice-Chair, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the January Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Update on Programs Offered by Independence Now – Sarah Basehart Sorensen, Executive Director, Independence Now:

Independence Now (IN) is a non-profit, non-residential Center for Independent Living (CIL) that promotes independent living and equal access for people with all types of disabilities through advocacy and resources. IN has a staff of 25 people and a budget of approximately \$1.3M with funding provided by Federal, State and County sources. Montgomery County's Aging and Disability Services assisted in the grant proposal for IN to be started 17 years ago. The County currently has a contract with IN for approximately \$53K to provide peer support and counseling services.

There are currently five centers for independent living or CIL's open in Maryland. Full and part-time Independent Living Specialists (ILS) work in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Services are provided free of charge and available to residents in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties who have a disability. IN's core services are:

- **Peer Counseling:** Serve as advocates and role models. Assist with self-exploration and self-directed goals setting and achievement. Direct consumers to appropriate services and programs. Plan recreational events that integrate individuals with disabilities with non-disabled peers.
- **Advocacy:** Staff works individually and in group settings with consumers to assist with increasing their advocacy skills and knowledge of their civil rights. Staff also interacts with local, state, and national legislators and agency leaders on behalf of people with disabilities to increase and improve transportation, education, programs, personal assistance services, overcoming architectural barriers and employment opportunities.
- **Independent Living Skills Training:** Independent Living specialists facilitate one-on-one and group skills trainings in an array of areas to promote independence, such as community-based living; decision making and time management; local, national and legislative laws; transportation and employment; budgeting, cooking and kitchen safety; and other areas according to individualized needs.
- **Information and Referral:** Serves as a resource and advocacy center by connection consumers and the general public with current information on programs, equipment and community resources.

Other services, programs and activities include housing information seminars, support groups, and monthly recreational activities. **Travel Training** is provided through a grant from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Travel Trainers teach residents in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties how to use Metro's fixed-route public bus and rail transportation services.

IN also facilitates a **Nursing Facility Outreach and Transition** program under the Money Follows the Person Program. Trained Peer Outreach Partners under contract with IN visit Medicaid-eligible nursing facility

residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties and inform those specific residents that there are resources that could allow them to live in the community if they choose to do so.

The **Home Modification and Assistive Technology (AT)** program assists people with disabilities to continue living independently by funding accessible modifications to their homes or acquire a piece of equipment to increase, maintain or improve their functional capabilities. IN can also assist consumers with locating accessible housing.

The **Maryland-Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF)** is a program for rising high school juniors and seniors with disabilities which provide a variety of support and informational activities. MYLF has not been active for the past two years due to lack of funding.

IN also provides a **Benefits InfoSource program** through with the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) project through the Social Security Administration (SSA). Work Incentive Counselors provide assistance to persons receiving disability benefits from Social Security who want to explore returning to work.

In response to a question about assistance with searching for housing, IN is available to assist residents in searching for housing.

One of Sarah's main priorities for the upcoming fiscal year is to maintain funding for programs. Due to budget cuts from both the State and County, there will be staff reductions with Montgomery and Prince George's Counties both losing a half-time ILS as well as cuts to the Assistive Technology program. There may be possibilities for new funding streams through the new Affordable Health Care for America Act.

Commissioners can receive IN's monthly newsletter by signing up via their website:
<http://www.innow.org/home/main/newsletter>.

Sarah asked Commissioners to help spread the word about the services IN offers.

Visit-Ability and Live-Ability – Elements of Design for Life Montgomery – Commissioners Cindy Buddington and Jackie Simon:

Jackie Simon, Commissioner, gave a brief history of the [Design for Life Montgomery](#) (DFLM) program, the first voluntary certification program in Maryland for Visit-Ability and Live-Ability in single family attached and detached homes. It was developed by the Commission and the Maryland National Capital Building Industry Association and Permitting Services along with endorsements by many other organizations. Its guidelines apply to both new construction and renovation of existing homes. Since the program was adopted in March, 2007, approximately 32 homes have been certified as visit-able or live-able.

Montgomery County is in the process of rewriting its zoning laws. Jackie stated that she thinks this would be an ideal time to introduce mandatory accessibility legislation.

Irving Shapiro, Commissioner, met with Delegate Jim Gilchrist recently at an event in Annapolis. Gilchrist has introduced bill this year that has single family home accessibility as indicated: [House Bill 981 – Housing – Maryland Building Performance Standards – Accessibility Standards](#). Note: In addition, as a reminder [House Bill 437 – Real Property – Sales of New Homes – Minimum Visitability Features](#) has been introduced by Delegate Niemann. It applies to new subdivisions of 11 or more new homes and 3 or more model homes. FOR the purpose of requiring a developer of new homes in a subdivision at the time of offering new homes in a subdivision for sale to make available for inspection a model home that contains minimum visitability features and to offer minimum visitability features as an option for purchase under certain circumstances; defining certain terms; providing for a delayed effective date; and generally relating to minimum visitability features in the sale of new homes.

The builders defeated the mandatory state legislation that was introduced last year. Jackie has found information regarding a bill introduced in Irvine, California, whereby residential homebuilders are encouraged to incorporate Universal Design features in the construction of new homes by offering accessibility features to

homeowners and advertising them along with other options. Vermont is the only state that has mandatory accessibility laws for single family homes. Baltimore City passed a law five years ago requiring that all publicly funded housing be made accessible. Permitting Services currently provides technical assistance for those who apply for building permits on how to renovate their homes.

CPWD will need to educate the County Executive, the County Council, and the Montgomery County Planning Board. Jackie has already spoken to the County Council as an individual about a mandatory program and two members are prepared to introduce legislation.

Jackie indicated that the League of Women Voters has adopted a resolution supporting both a voluntary Design for Life Montgomery program and a mandatory one.

Jackie Simon, Commissioner, proposed the following motions:

1. The Commission seek legislation making the existing Visit-Ability element of the Montgomery County Design for Life Program mandatory in not less than 50% of all new single family attached and detached Homes. Further, that the Live-Ability aspect of the Design for Life program be mandatory in no fewer than 25% of all new single family attached and detached homes. And finally, Montgomery County require that in all future mixed use development where construction of residential units are built over retail or offices must be serviced by an elevator.
2. Montgomery County explore making Visit-Ability mandatory in all home renovations taking into consideration the scope, nature and cost of the renovation. But in no event, will a home remodeling, teardown or renovation permit be issued without the benefits of Visit-Ability being explained and encouraged.
3. The Commission on People with Disabilities use every means possible to influence the inclusion of Visit-Ability and Live-ability concepts as sound Public Policy in: The Housing Element of the General Plan The Zoning Re-write as an element of Sustainability All Master Plan revision The County Housing Policy.

Due to time constraints, and an interest to continue the discussion, the motions were tabled until the next meeting.

Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Trish Gallalee, Chair, and Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, will be attending the annual Boards, Committees, and Commissions Meeting with County Executive Leggett on Thursday, February 10th. They will present the Commission's Fiscal Year 2012 Key Issues of Concern.

2011 Goal Updates: Tabled until next meeting due to time.

New Business: Tabled until next meeting due to time.

Action Item Review: None.

Announcements:

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, announced that the Commission on Health (COH) has drafted a letter in support of the CPWD's motion for the County to assess its enforcement efforts of disabled parking. COH will vote to send the letter to County Executive Leggett at their next meeting.

The Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) submitted their final report to the County Council and County Executive on January 31st, 2011. The report makes recommendations for structural and organizational changes as well as procedural and operational changes. The ORC is recommending that the Commission for Women and the Human Rights Commission be eliminated and that the functions of both Commissions be consolidated into other departments. View the full report:

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/PDF/REPORTS/ORC/ORC_FinalReport.pdf.

The County Executive has come out with his response to this report
http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/home/pdf/ce_response_orc.pdf

Community Speaks: None.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, March 9th, 2011 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD – Lobby Auditorium, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, March 16th, 2011 - 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD - 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Office Services Coordinator
Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist